

JHA FOOTNOTES



JHA Update

Your historical association has been busy this winter working on inventory at the museum, and upcoming open house projects.

This spring, we have a new, more interactive open house schedule with our 'History Mystery'. We hope you can come to the March and/or April Open House and try your hand solving the mystery. If you come to both, the chances of getting the same mystery questions is unlikely. We hope you will come, try your chance at a gift and come back again in April.

We are also getting ready for our "When and wear" coming in May where we will be highlighting some of the vintage clothing in our collection.

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www.jenisonhistory.org

Are you a Jenison Historical Association Member?

If you have ever thought about joining JHA, consider joining this year. Your dues support the Association (a 501c3 organization) in our efforts to preserve the history of Jenison/Georgetown Township area.

Lumber Barons of West Michigan

By Yvonne Williams

In the year 1835 Michigan was considered a territory in the far west. The population of the wilderness territory was around 90,000 people and much of the area was covered with large stands of white pine trees. A family living in Canton New York heard about Michigan and decided to move there. That family was the Lemuel Jenison family.

The Jenisons were well known in Canton area and had been a very wealthy. Because of his wealth, the father, Lemuel, loaned money to people in the area. As a result of many loan defaults, the fortune soon dwindled. With the rumors of Michigan being 'El Dorado' reaching people in the East, the family sent the oldest son to Michigan to check things out. After finding his way to Michigan and looking over the area, he reported that it was a place of opportunity for lumbering.

Lemuel and Sara Jenison soon traveled to Michigan with their seven children. Their son Hiram was 23 years old and of great help to their father. The other two sons were 12 year old twins Luman and Lucius. The remaining siblings were daughters Harriet, Altha, Annie and Betsy. The Jenison family first settled in the Wyoming Township area for two years and then moved to Georgetown Township to begin clearing 120 acres of land for their homestead and lumbering business.

Lemuel met with tragedy on September 24, 1837 as he was clearing the land around his new homestead. A tree limb fell on him and he did not survive. The sons pitched in to support the family by lumbering even though they were very young. Just two years later, their mother also died so the girls took over the running of the household.

The lumbering business was very successful. The trees were cut and the lumber sent down the Grand River for shipment to Chicago and other areas. In fact, Luman Jenison was the one to ride their first raft load of lumber down the river at age 16.

There were two sawmills on Rush Creek that were operated by the Jenisons in their early years



*Lucius and Luman
Jenison*

of logging. The first year they cut 1,000,000 board feet of lumber and later cut up to 4,000,000 board feet of lumber in a season. (Hotchkiss, 192)

Hiram and the twins purchased 1,600 additional acres at \$1.50 per acre from the Michigan Lumber Company of Chicago. After the logs were harvested, the land was improved by the Jenisons or sold to be cleared for farming. The tree stumps were pulled out of the ground by a stump puller and stumps were often placed around the perimeter of fields to be used as fences. They continued to run the lumbering business for 25 years.

Hiram groomed Luman to take over the business aspects of their family and Lucius was in charge of the farming. They built an improved sawmill, a large flour mill, a general store and the list goes on. In 1880 they purchased 10,000 acres of land in various locations in Jenison, Hudsonville, Grandville and Grand Rapids.

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After their brother Hiram died in 1889, the twins continued to expand their holdings and interests. They were known for their generosity to the community for gifts of land for local churches, schools, roads and monetary gifts to organizations. "Along with the Jenisons, John Haire, Galen Eastman, and the Weatherwaxes were the leading 'lumber barons' in the Georgetown area." (McGee,64)

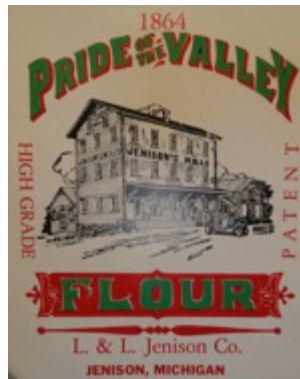
One of the last large ventures of Luman and Lucius Jenison was to develop a park on Black Lake (now Lake Macatawa) in Holland, Michigan "...in April 1891, Lucius and Luman purchased the Shady Side Resort from Williams J. Scott and his wife, Charlotte, for the sum of \$1,339.20. This purchase included the hotel, skating rink/dance hall, dock and an additional ten acres of land...." (Kayes, 22) The park was soon renamed Jenison Park and Luman and Lucius began to make improvements.

People would come by boats from as far away as Chicago to spend several days in the beautiful hotel and wander the many trails in the park. Several hundred people could be accommodated in the park at a time.

On the evening of July 24, 1897, the Jenison Park Hotel caught on fire. The many

wealthy people staying there escaped the fire but lost most of their valuables and fine clothing that they had brought with them. The twins made plans to rebuild the hotel.

Just two years later the Jenison homestead where Lucius lived was destroyed by fire. He died a couple of weeks later on March 21, 1899 from the pneumonia he contracted after trying to save his home. Luman never recovered from the loss of his twin brother and died October 6 of that same year.



As reported in the local papers, at the time of their deaths, the Jenison twins owned the Jenison Park in Holland, the store, grist mill, and old factory in Jenison, 460 acres of farming land in Ottawa and Kent counties, the Kent Country Club in Grand Rapids and other valuable properties. "They are said to have left \$60,000 in debt but good judges estimate that Mrs. B. S. Hanchett Jr. and her mother will receive \$150,000 after all claims are paid." (Kayes, 35)

The Jenison Park was further developed by the twin's

nephew Benjamin Hanchett Jr. in 1900. Ben built an Interurban railroad to carry visitors to the renamed Jenison Electric Park and continued operating the park for the next ten years.

Margaret Husband, (mother of Mrs. Benjamin S. Hanchett) built a beautiful Victorian mansion in 1903 to honor the twins. That mansion now houses the Jenison Historical Museum in Jenison, Michigan.

The influence and generosity of the Jenison family has a rich history in the greater Jenison area. It was lumber that brought them to the area and gave them riches but it was their generosity and community commitment that makes them rich in our memories.

Hotchkiss, George W : History of the Lumber and Forest Industry of the Northwest. Georg W. Hotchkiss and Co., Chicago 1898

In Memoriam Grand Rapids, Michigan : Dickinson Bros. Engravers and Printers, 1899.

Kayes, Lois Jesiek Jenison Park, Holland, Michigan: A History (Final draft): Holland, Michigan: InDepth Publications, 2013.

McGee, John W. editor : Bend in the River : Grand Rapids, Michigan : William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company

Upcoming Open Houses

Jenison Museum “History Mystery”

March 2, 2016 – 10 to Noon AM

March 19 – 2 to 4 PM

April 5, 2016 – 10 to Noon AM

April 16, 2016 – 2 to 4 PM

Tour the Museum during the March and April Open Houses to look for clues about Jenison History.

Jenison Museum Souvenir’s

Our newest souvenir in the Gift Shop is still available for sale. This year we are highlighting the Jenison Mill. We also have a few of our previous design from 2012 highlighting the Jenison Museum



Prices: \$15 each or two for \$25

Find us on Facebook at Jenison History Association and become a friend.

JHA Trustee’s

Chair

Liz Timmer (2016)
457-3708

Vice Chair/Curator/Tours

Ken Williams (2017)
772.6523

Treasurer/Editor

Ruth Lowing (2017)
540-4709

Social Secretary

Nellie DeLaat (2016)
457-1193

Recording Secretary

Linda Droog (2018)
457-3016

Archivist

Barb Semeyn (2017)
457-9343

Maintenance/Historian

Mike Timmer (2016)
531-1218

Trustee

Yvonne Williams (2017)
772-6523
Gene Kort (2016)
534-6769

Township Rep

Ron Villerius

(####) = year of term expiration

Contact Information: Members may contact the board at the above phone numbers or leave a message at 457-4398 or info@jenisonhistory.org

Organization Membership in the Historical Association of Michigan
Find us on the registry of the Historical Society of Michigan
www.hsmichigan.org

2016 Association Schedule

Museum Open House Schedule

Open House schedule

March 1, 2016 10-12 AM "History Mystery"
March 19, 2016 2-4 PM - "History Mystery"
April 5, 2016 10-12 AM - "History Mystery"
April 16, 2016 2-4 PM - "History Mystery"
May 3, 2016 - 10-12 AM - "When and Wear"
May 21, 2016 - 2-4 PM - "When and Wear"
June 7, 2016 - 10-12 AM - "When and Wear"
June 18, 2016 - 2-4 PM - "When and Wear"

Check out the web site for the entire 2016 schedule

Meeting Schedule

Meetings are all open to the public and held on the **3rd Thursday** of the month at 6:45 PM at the Georgetown Library, unless noted. No meeting in December.

Thursday, March 17

Thursday, April 21

Thursday, May 19

Thursday, June 16

Thursday, July 21

Thursday, August 18

Thursday, September 15

Thursday, October 20

Thursday, November 17

> > No meeting in December

www.jenisonhistory.org

JENISON HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

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